

THE GOD OF SMALL THINGS: A TALE OF A YOUNG MOTHER'S DESIRE, DREAM, DISCRIMINATION, AND DEATH

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ABSTRACT

In her Booker prize winning novel *The God of Small Things*, Roy has sung a saga of a young mother's desires, dreams, discrimination, death and exploitation partially in the hand of the patriarchal male dominated Indian society and partially in the rigid Indian caste system so called untouchability.

Ammu the female protagonist of the novel has to lose her life for having an affair and physical relation with a young carpenter, with German sensibility, because he was untouchable. Velutha, the protagonist of the novel has to lose his life also, as being untouchable he has touched (physical relation) the touchable, the Syrian Christian divorcee, Ammu who was for him just like the forbidden fruit. Velutha was an untouchable as Mammachi says "*They are not allowed to touch anything that Touchable touched. Caste Hindu and Caste Christian.*"(73).

So my paper seeks to highlight the resistance of mother, silent desire of a woman, discrimination of a mother towards her daughter, humiliation and helplessness of a divorce lady, responsibilities of two children to a very young mother without any financial security, the plight of sexual desire of a woman, and the tragic death of a powerless lover for transgression of social laws all these issues in depth.

Key Words: Death, Desire, Discrimination, young mother, untouchability, and social laws.

In her Booker prize winning novel *The God of Small Things*, Roy has sung a saga of a young mother's desires, dreams, discrimination, death and exploitation partially in the hand of the patriarchal male dominated Indian society and partially in the rigid Indian caste system so called untouchability. Ammu the female protagonist of the novel has to lose her life for having an affair and physical relation with a young carpenter, with German sensibility, because he was untouchable. Velutha, the protagonist of the novel has to lose his life also as being untouchable he has touched (physical relation) the touchable, the Syrian Christian divorcee, Ammu who was for him just like the forbidden fruit. Velutha was an untouchable as Mammachi says "*They are not allowed to touch anything that Touchable touched. Caste Hindu and Caste Christian.*"(73).

This untouchable not only touched her touchable daughter but also tasted the touchable parts of the touchable lady. So this is the demand of rigid caste system of Ayemenem to face such an inhuman treatment by Kottayam Police that caused the death of this helpless untouchable carpenter.

The God of Small Things is the story of a young mother who has two children's responsibility without any financial security. This is the tale of a young woman's dreams of having a happy family with her loving children and the untouchable man, whom she loved and who also loved her. As Roy has pointed out that "It was this that grew inside her, and eventually led her to love by night the man her children loved by day". (44). Although Ammu has faced lots of terrible and tragic incidents, even innocent Velutha's death in police custody still she has collected the competence to live for the sake of her children; she promised her son Estha that "I'll be a teacher. I'll start a school. And you and Rahel will be in it. And we'll be able to afford it because it will be ours." (325). Ammu was everything for her twin children as Roy mentions in the novel "She was their Ammu and their Baba and she had loved them Double" (163). So she also had to sacrifice double for their lives. Her children's childhood was destroyed and their lives were shattered. When the news of her physical relation with Velutha the untouchable exposed and Ammu was locked in her bedroom. Her children went to History house along with the English child Sophie Mol who was drowned in the river. Her children were responsible for her death according to Baby Kochamma as she says to these children "it was a small price to pay. Was it? Two lives. Two children's childhoods. And a history lesson for future offenders" (336). This is the tale of a sister who was humiliated by her own brother. Chacko considered that her children were responsible for his English daughter's death. He humiliated and ordered his sister "Get out of my house before I break every bone in your body! My house, my pineapples, my pickle". (225)

Ammu was discriminated by her own mother. Mammachi favored, support and arranged her son's physical need as she herself says to Kochamma "He can't help having a Man's Needs" (168). In case of her daughter she was so much biased, because of her mother's lack of support her life was destroyed. For the sake of her son's sexual desire "Mammachi had a separate entrance built for Chacko's room which was at the eastern end of the house, so that the objects of his 'Needs' wouldn't have to go traipsing through the house. She secretly slipped them money to keep them happy. They took it because they needed it." (169). She was humiliated by her brother who must have had supported her for her critical condition but he well thought-out to her "Who has to pack her bags and leave. Because she had no Locusts Stand I. Because Chacko said she had destroyed enough already. Who came back to Ayemenem with asthma and a rattle in her chest that sound like a faraway man shouting" (159). She and her children were the subject of humiliation and insult in Ayemenem family everyone has copy right to insult them.

This is the tale of a young daughter as being divorcee who does not have any possession in her mother's factory and became the unwelcomed and unwanted guest in her own parents' home. This is the tale of the daughter whose father "Pappachi insisted that a college education unnecessary expense for a girl, so Ammu had no choice but to leave Delhi and move with them ...to wait for marriage proposal while she helped her mother in the house work. Since her father did not have enough money to raise a suitable dowry". (38) This is the tragic tale of a woman who dared to love or dare to full fill her desire with the man who is considered untouchable by the unyielding caste based society. This is the tale of a woman who has broken "the laws that lay down who should be loved and how. And how much". (33). She has broken the prescribed laws

for her sexual liberty. This is tale of a lover who was responsible for such inhuman treatment with her lover that led her lover's death.

Ammu in the novel *The God of Small Things* has a very simple desire and dream as every woman has of having a complete family with lovely children and loving husband this notion has been destroyed by her husband. Mr. Hollick, (Ammu's husband' boss) charmed by her beauty and says to her husband that “ *You are very lucky man ,you know ,wonderful family ,beautiful children ,such an attractive wife...He lit a cigarette and allowed the match to burn until he couldn't hold it any more. An extremely attractive wife...* ” (42).

This is the tale of a woman whose husband forced her to sleep with his boss in order to save his job. As Roy points out, “Mr., Hollick suggested that Ammu be sent to his bungalow to 'looked after'. (42). She was not only discriminated by her mother, brother and her aunt but also by the society and by the Kottayam Police because she was touchable and had (physical relation) with an untouchable. Ammu went to police station to inform about the real happenings and to contradict false story that is conveyed by Baby Kochamma to the police. Thomas Mathew mortified her and “*he tapped her breasts with his baton, it was not a policeman's spontaneous brutishness on his part .He knew exactly what he was doing .It was a premeditated gesture, calculated to humiliate and terrorize her*” (260). She was so terrified and upset for whatever had happened to her that “*She had woken up at night to escape from a familiar, recurrent dream in which policemen approached her with snicking scissors, wanting to cut off her hair. They did that in Kottayam to prostitutes whom they had caught in the bazaar –branded them so that everybody know them for what they were. Veshyas*”. (161).

Baby Kochamma all time taunted Ammu and she feels that *she “quarreling with a fate that she, Baby Kochamma herself, felt she had graciously accepted. The fate of the wretched Man-less woman”* (44-5). These circumstances also promoted Ammu to fall in love with Velutha. She gets love and affections from this Untouchable carpenter not only for herself but also for her children. Velutha is the only one who loved them by heart. The only one, who played with them, enjoyed their company and fulfilled their childish wishes like a father .The mother of these two fatherless children Ammu is always marginalized in her parent's home. She was a divorce lady with great responsibility of two children's upbringing. She is disgraced by her relatives. Baby Kochamma always makes them realize that *they “really have no right to be there”* (44).

Ammu brings into being that her lover who truly loved her was no more in this world. Her children's childhood already destroyed one was with his father without mother's love ad one was with her grandmother's home where she was nothing else just a burden, a subject of humiliation for the family. Still she was trying to accumulate some courage to fight with the situations .She has to lose her job as a receptionist because she was in poor health and they want a healthy receptionist. She went to for a job interview as a secretary in the Bharat Lodge “*Where she died alone “she was thirty one. Not old, not young, but a die-able-age*”. (161). Her death was not only a woman's death it was the death of a mother who loved her children most, it was death of a lover who loved her lover most, it was the death of a touchable who touched the untouchable, it was death of a daughter who never went against her mother's discrimination, it was death of a sister who always followed her brother's orders, it was death of niece who always faced humiliation by her aunt for getting married to a Hindu Bengali.

The agony and the mortification of this young mother were not over even after her death. “*The church refused to bury Ammu. On several counts. So Chacko hired a van to transport the body to*

the electric crematorium. He had her wrapped in a dirty bed sheet and laid out on stretcher. Rahel thought she looked like Roman Senator.”(162).

Arundhati Roy has very truly depicted the social position of a woman, who went beyond the social law, the agony and helplessness of a husband-less wife and the plight of discrimination and death of a young mother who tried to give happiness to her loving twins. Finally this loving young mother formed herself into a pink receipt. This stultifying caste system and male-dominated society, Baby Kochamma and Chacko did not allow this young mother to live with her children happily because, she had physical relation with the untouchable and had transgressed the social laws pertaining to caste system. As her daughter Rahel thought about her that “*Her ashes .The grit from her bones. The teeth from her smile the whole of her crammed into a little clay pot. Receipt No. Q498673*”.

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